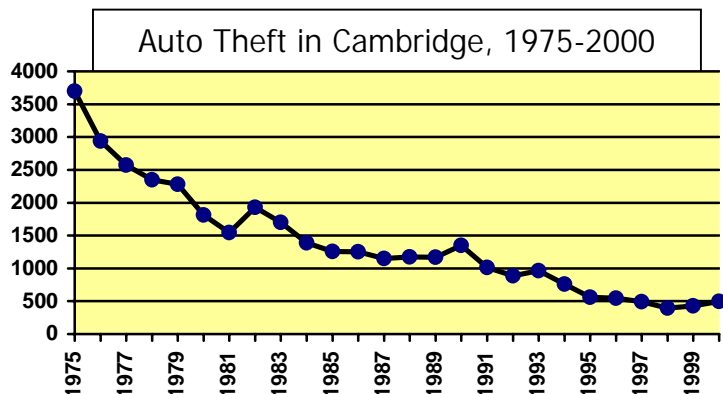


# Auto Theft

431 in 1999 • 498 in 2000 • Up 16%



Defined as the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle, this offense category includes the theft of automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, and snowmobiles. This definition excludes the taking of a motor vehicle for temporary use by persons having lawful access.

Auto theft has shown the most consistent and dramatic decline of any crime over the past 20 years. The 2000 total of 498, although up 16% from 1999, still represents a decrease of 81% from 20 years ago and 63% from 10 years ago. The 1998 total was the lowest in over 35 years. Statistics for auto theft are considered highly reliable because almost all auto thefts are reported to the police.

More than any other crime, auto theft has been positively influenced by effective law enforcement activity. This steady decline can be attributed to the near elimination of "chop shops" that trade in stolen parts and interstate auto theft rings (in part by the Governor's Auto Theft Strike Force); crackdowns on insurance fraud; advances in automobile security; and new technologies that enable patrol officers to quickly check a vehicle's registry listing and determine if it is stolen. The result is that "for profit" thefts are nearly a thing of the past. Most of today's auto thieves are joy riders or people looking for short-term transportation; over 80% of stolen cars are

recovered relatively intact, usually within five days of being stolen.

Unlike 1998 and 1999, almost every month this year was marked with an increase in this crime. The 16% increase recorded this year may have been even more dramatic had it not been for the Camry theft pattern that ravaged the auto theft totals for the fall of 1999. The one major decrease recorded this year was in the month of October, which was when the Camry theft pattern became really damaging last year.

## Geography

East Cambridge, Area 4, and Cambridgeport generally show the highest auto theft totals—they are the top three in both the 1990s average totals and the 2000 totals. Area 4's and Cambridgeport's high totals come from their dense residential populations and their Central Square area commercial parking lots. East Cambridge has some

## Auto Theft by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1990s Average	1998	1999	2000	Change 99-00	% of 00 Total	1990s Rank	2000 Rank
East Cambridge	87	48	67	<b>78</b>	+29%	16%	2	2
MIT	58	20	34	<b>31</b>	-9%	6%	6	7
Inman/Harrington	50	42	28	<b>40</b>	+43%	8%	7	5
Area 4	77	63	64	<b>95</b>	+48%	20%	3	1
Cambridgeport	88	52	57	<b>64</b>	+12%	13%	1	3
Mid-Cambridge	72	24	30	<b>49</b>	+63%	10%	4/5	4
Riverside	43	31	36	<b>26</b>	-28%	5%	10	9
Agassiz	21	3	11	<b>12</b>	+9%	2%	11	11/12
Peabody	44	37	27	<b>30</b>	+11%	6%	9	8
West Cambridge	45	31	23	<b>20</b>	-13%	4%	8	10
North Cambridge	72	36	38	<b>36</b>	-5%	7%	4/5	6
Highlands	16	10	10	<b>12</b>	+20%	2%	12	11/12
Strawberry Hill	9	0	6	<b>5</b>	-17%	1%	13	13

of the densest commercial parking in the city.

The MIT neighborhood is notable for the fact that almost 70% of its auto thefts occur on Vassar Street. Forty-four percent of the auto thefts in North Cambridge occurred along the apartment buildings on Rindge Avenue and 25% of the auto thefts reported in the Inman/Harrington neighborhood occurred on Cambridge St.

No neighborhood ended 2000 higher than its decade average. Mid Cambridge was the most improved despite its high rank this year, ending 2000 50% below its decade average. None of the neighborhoods drastically increased in rank this year.

## Targets

The Honda Accord is almost always at the top of the auto theft list with the exception of last year. In 1999, the Toyota Camry ranked at the top of the list due to the fall/winter Camry theft pattern. As usual, the Toyota Camry and the Honda Civic round out the top three.

Makes		Models	
Honda	99	Honda Accord	42
Toyota	89	Toyota Camry	41
Ford	39	Honda Civic	35
Acura	31	Toyota Corolla	28
Chevrolet	26	Acura Integra	19
Jeep	16	Jeep Cherokee	11
Dodge	15	Toyota Celica	6
Nissan	12	Dodge Caravan	5
Mazda	10	Acura Legend	5
Mitsubishi	9	Ford Explorer	5

There were a few other changes; the Oldsmobile Cutlass completely dropped off the list of models (4 were stolen in 1999, 1 was stolen in 2000), the Nissan Maxima, Toyota Tercel and Ford Escort also all disappeared. In their place came the Ford Explorer, Dodge Caravan, and Acura Legend. Sports-utility vehicles in general have seen a higher theft rate this year than in previous years, although only the Cherokee and Explorer made the top ten list.

For the past several years, late 1980s model Camrys, Accords, Corollas, and Civics have topped the list of stolen cars. The fact that these particular models are stolen more than any other is a function of several factors. First, these cars are some of the most commonly owned models in the nation, making them more widely available. Simple statistical probability would place them at the top of any theft list. Second, car thieves tend to look for average-cost, commonly owned, inconspicuous cars. High-priced luxury cars are not stolen very often because they are too easy for someone to spot. Finally, if profit is the motivation behind the theft, parts for older-model, commonly owned vehicles are more in demand.

## Recoveries

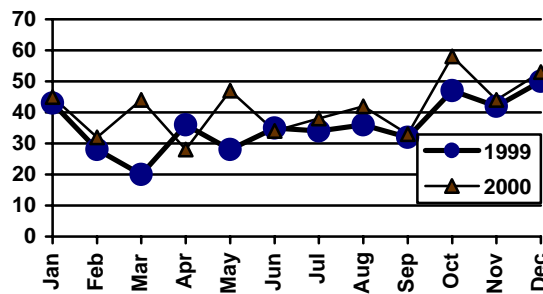
As of this report, 70% of the vehicles stolen from Cambridge in 2000 have since been recovered. Most of our recoveries continue to come from the Dorchester and Roxbury sections of Boston, the city of Somerville, and the Cambridgeport and Area 4 neighborhoods in Cambridge. Most recovered vehicles show damage to one of the doors and to the ignition or the steering column. About half of the recovered vehicles have items missing, such as the stereo, car phone or other items left in the car. The following cities are the most likely recovery sites:

City/Neighborhood	Recoveries
<b>Boston</b>	
Downtown/Beacon Hill/Chinatown	2
East Boston	3
Charlestown	3
Roxbury/Mission Hill	24
Mattapan	10
South Boston	2
Dorchester	25
Back Bay/South End/Fenway	8
Allston/Brighton	5
West Roxbury/Roslindale	4
Jamaica Plain	8
Unknown	4
<b>Cambridge</b>	
East Cambridge	4
MIT	2
Inman/Harrington	3
Area 4	20
Cambridgeport	10
Mid-Cambridge	5
Riverside	7
Peabody	6
North Cambridge	9
Unknown	2
<b>Somerville</b>	22
<b>Chelsea</b>	9
<b>Medford</b>	8
<b>Everett</b>	5
<b>Revere</b>	3
<b>Lynn</b>	6

## Offenders

The Cambridge Police Department arrested 8 people—all males—for auto theft or receiving stolen property in 2000. Offenders' ages ranged from 14 to 43, with an average age of 29. Two were juveniles. Two of the offenders were from Cambridge (one from the Area 4 neighborhood and one from the North Cambridge neighborhood); two were from Boston; two were homeless; 1 was from Maryland; and 1 was from Belmont.

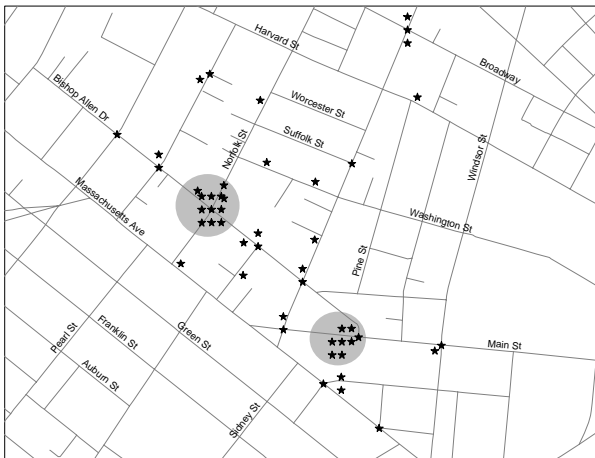
## Seasonal Variations



A look at the monthly trends shows that auto thefts ran steady with 1999 except for between February and June. Between those four months, season trends reversed and auto thefts sharply increased and decreased in opposition of the auto thefts reported in 1999.

## Top Auto Theft Hot Spots in 2000:

### Area 4



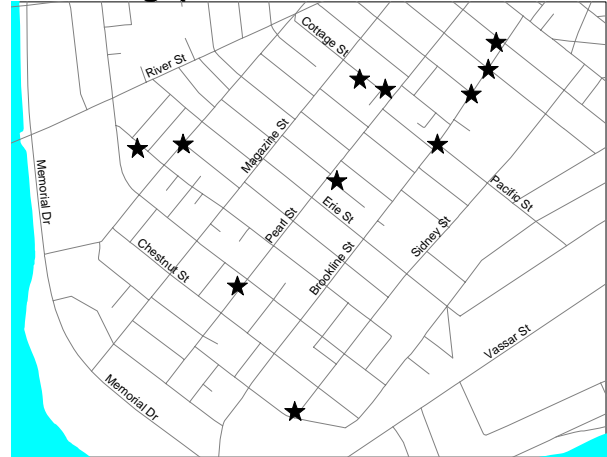
Area 4 led the neighborhoods in auto thefts this year. Nearly a 50% increase was reported in this neighborhood as compared with 1999. Area 4 was recorded as the top hotspot for both auto thefts and larcenies from motor vehicles. The areas of Norfolk Street & Bishop Allen Drive and 844 Main Street reported the highest concentration of thefts. Thieves targeted cars between Fridays and Mondays between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. Over 70% of the auto thefts were recovered. Recoveries were reported in Cambridge, Mattapan, Boston, Chelsea, Swampscott, Braintree, and Somerville. Most of the vehicles suffered various body damage and reported radios missing.

### Parking Garage at Museum Way

Twelve MVs have been stolen from the parking garages on Museum Way this year. In almost all of

the incidents, the owner left the keys with the valet service and the car was later stolen. All of the cars were recovered, a majority in Charlestown. Thieves targeted high-priced cars manufactured within the last two years, i.e. 2000 Mercedes ML320. Cars typically were taken on the weekends between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m.

## Cambridgeport



The Cambridgeport neighborhood suffered a variation of last year's Toyota Camry theft pattern this year. Eleven thefts were reported in a tight cluster in March of this year. Seven Toyotas, three Hondas, and one Acura were taken. The thefts were concentrated between Thursdays and Sundays. Recoveries were reported in Charlestown, Roxbury, and Lynn with extensive body and ignition damage.

## Rindge Avenue Apartments

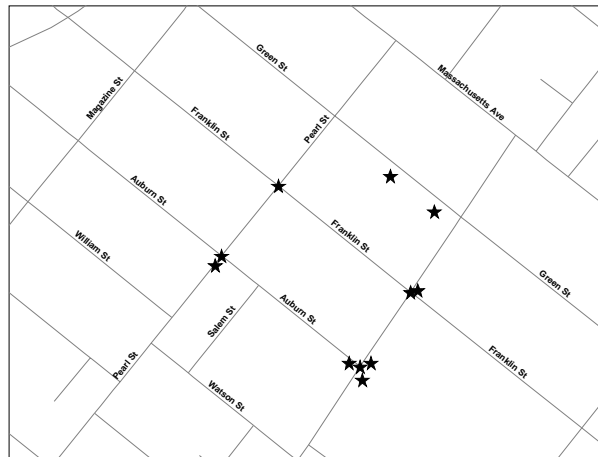


Ten auto thefts were reported from the lot shared by three large apartment buildings between 362-402 Rindge Avenue. Theft was scattered during the week and usually occurred sometime after the owner parked the car for the night in the parking lot. 80% of the cars stolen were recovered – three were recovered in Lynn. Most reported some damage, but the damage varied.

### Vassar Street (MIT)

With 21 thefts, Vassar Street—which runs along the backside of MIT—reports more thefts than any other single street. Cars pack this free-parking street night and day, and thefts consequently occur around the clock. A high concentration of thefts occurred between the 200 and 300 block of this street.

### Auburn/Franklin/Green Streets



A tight cluster of auto thefts was reported in a two-block radius in northern Cambridge. Incidents occurred throughout the year, however a high concentration was reported between January and April. Thieves targeted cars parked overnight and struck in the early morning hours. Five out of the eleven thefts reported in this area were of Toyota Corollas. Two were attempts. Recoveries were made as close as Cambridge and as far away as New York City. Most of the recovered vehicles reported ignition damage and some body damage.

### First/Second/Third Streets



First, Second, and Third Streets in East Cambridge reported a cluster of auto thefts this year. Theft occurred during the week, with a high concentration on Mondays. Thieves targeted cars parked on streets near the Galleria Mall throughout the day. Theft increased during the summer months. Most of the vehicles were recovered – the farthest location reported was Newark, NJ. Most vehicles reported ignition damage.